STAR WARS
DARTH VADER
MARVEL
010
GILLEN
LARROCA
DELGADO
delgado

Book II, Part IV

SHADOWS AND SECRETS

It is a period of uncertainty. After the destruction of the Death Star by a Force-strong rebel pilot, the Sith Lord DARTH VADER has taken it upon himself to discover the pilot's true identity under the Empire's ever-watchful eye.

Using the expertise of archaeologist and droid expert DOCTOR APHRA and a carefully selected crew of bounty hunters, Vader looted a stash of credits from an Imperial cruiser under the guise of an accident. However, Vader's new adjutant Inspector Thanoth knows that all is not what it seems and plans to investigate the situation further.

Meanwhile Aphra, along with droids BT-1 and 000, are off to continue Vader's mission: chasing information on the rebel pilot....

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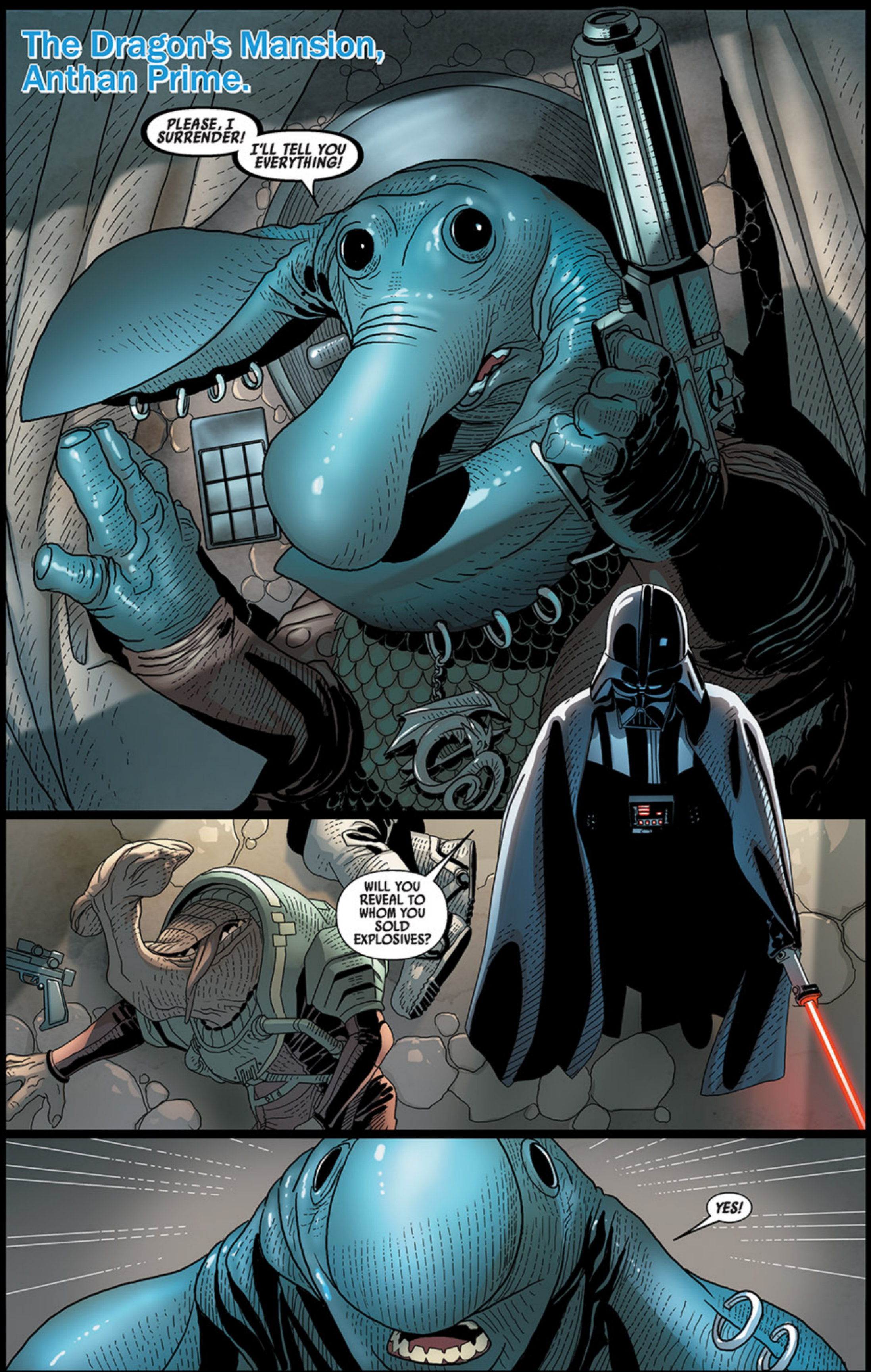
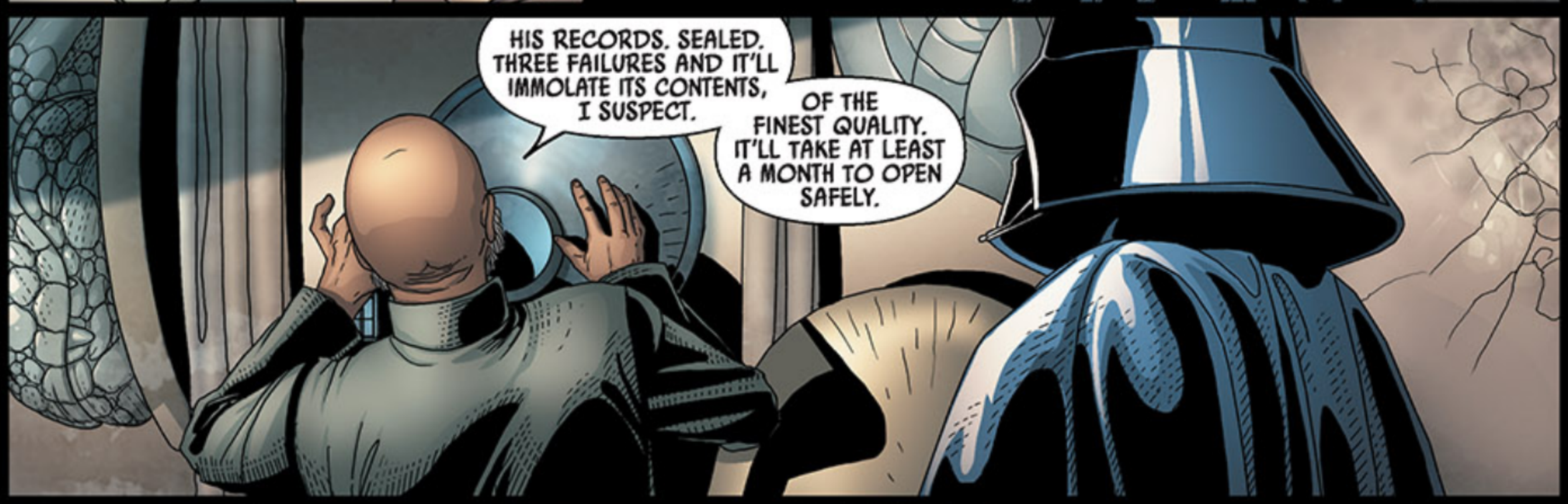

The Dragon's Mansion, Anthan Prime.
PLEASE, I SURRENDER!
I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING!
WILL YOU REVEAL TO WHOM YOU SOLD EXPLOSIVES?
YES!

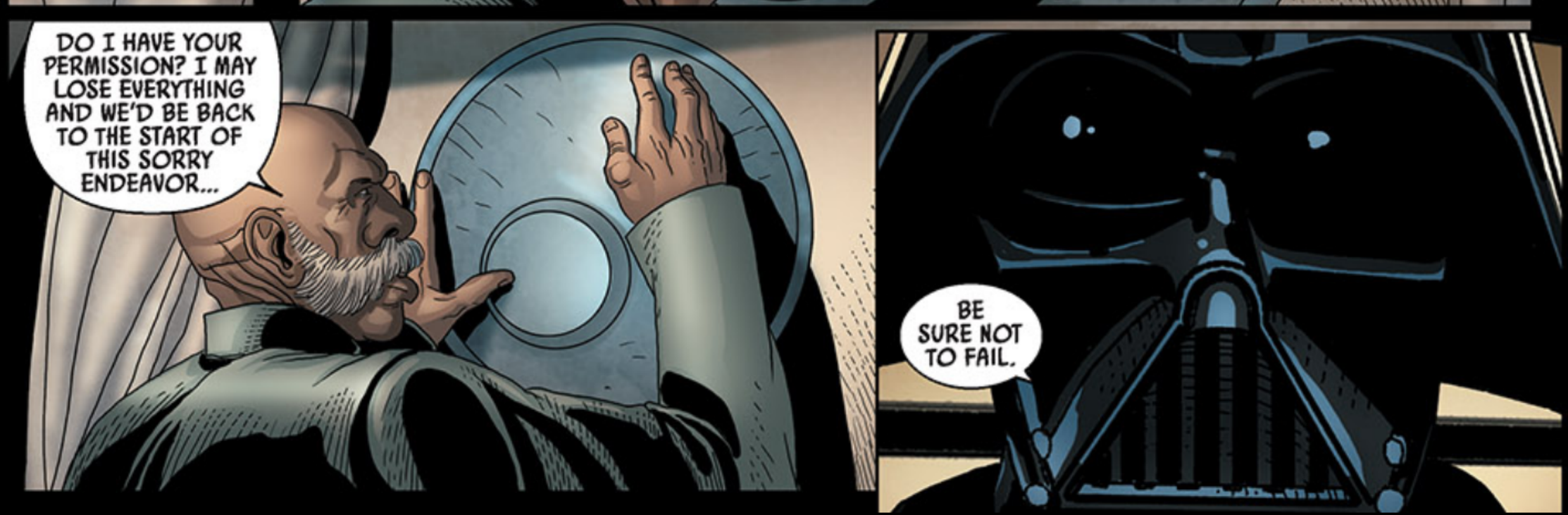
A SHAME.
CURSES! WHAT HAPPENED?

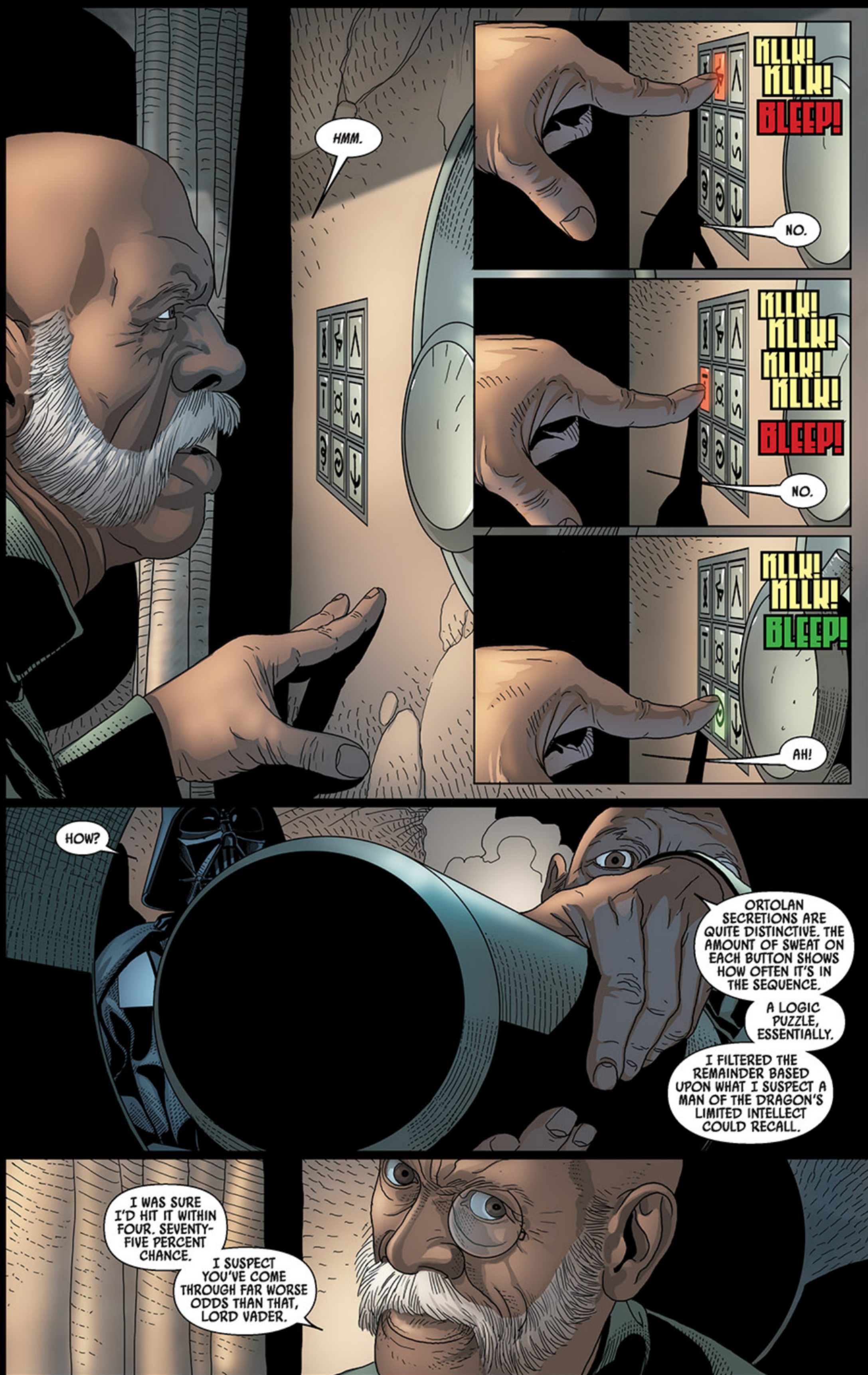
THE DRAGON SAID HE'D DETONATE THE BUILDING.
I PREVENTED HIM.
NO SIGN OF ANY TRIGGER. HE WAS BLUFFING. COULDN'T YOU TELL?
DO NOT SPEAK AS IF YOU UNDERSTAND THE FORCE, INSPECTOR.

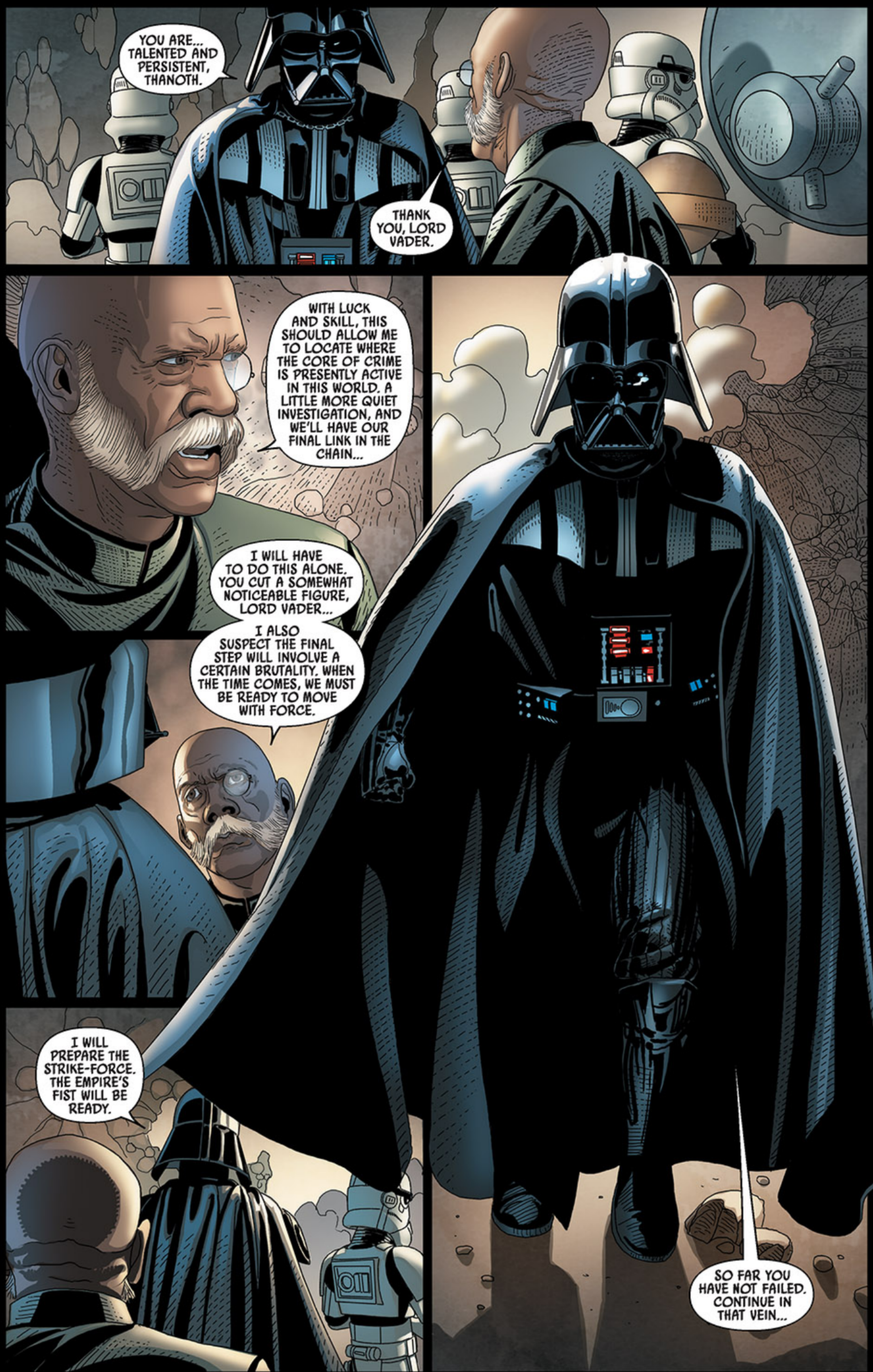

HIS RECORDS. SEALED. THREE FAILURES AND IT'LL IMMOLATE ITS CONTENTS, I SUSPECT.
OF THE FINEST QUALITY. IT'LL TAKE AT LEAST A MONTH TO OPEN SAFELY.

I MUST TRY. IMMEDIATELY.
IS THE URGENCY NECESSARY?

CRIMINALS ARE LIKE BUGS. THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF THE LIGHT AND THEY SCUTTLE AWAY, NEVER TO BE FOUND AGAIN.
WE ARE DISTURBING THE TOPSOIL. YOU CAN BE CERTAIN THEY ARE ALREADY BURROWING AWAY FROM US.


DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION? I MAY LOSE EVERYTHING AND WE'D BE BACK TO THE START OF THIS SORRY ENDEAVOR...
BE SURE NOT TO FAIL.


HMM.
KLLK! KLLK! BLEEP!
NO.
KLLK! KLLK! KLLK! KLLK! BLEEP!
NO.
KLLK! KLLK! BLEEP!
AH!
HOW?
ORTOLAN SECRETIONS ARE QUITE DISTINCTIVE. THE AMOUNT OF SWEAT ON EACH BUTTON SHOWS HOW OFTEN IT'S IN THE SEQUENCE.
A LOGIC PUZZLE, ESSENTIALLY.
I FILTERED THE REMAINDER BASED UPON WHAT I SUSPECT A MAN OF THE DRAGON'S LIMITED INTELLECT COULD RECALL.
I WAS SURE I'D HIT IT WITHIN FOUR. SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT CHANCE.
I SUSPECT YOU'VE COME THROUGH FAR WORSE ODDS THAN THAT, LORD VADER.


YOU ARE... TALENTED AND PERSISTENT, THANOTH.
THANK YOU, LORD VADER.
WITH LUCK AND SKILL, THIS SHOULD ALLOW ME TO LOCATE WHERE THE CORE OF CRIME IS PRESENTLY ACTIVE IN THIS WORLD. A LITTLE MORE QUIET INVESTIGATION, AND WE'LL HAVE OUR FINAL LINK IN THE CHAIN...
I WILL HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE. YOU CUT A SOMEWHAT NOTICEABLE FIGURE, LORD VADER...
I ALSO SUSPECT THE FINAL STEP WILL INVOLVE A CERTAIN BRUTALITY. WHEN THE TIME COMES, WE MUST BE READY TO MOVE WITH FORCE.
I WILL PREPARE THE STRIKE-FORCE. THE EMPIRE'S FIST WILL BE READY.
SO FAR YOU HAVE NOT FAILED. CONTINUE IN THAT VEIN...

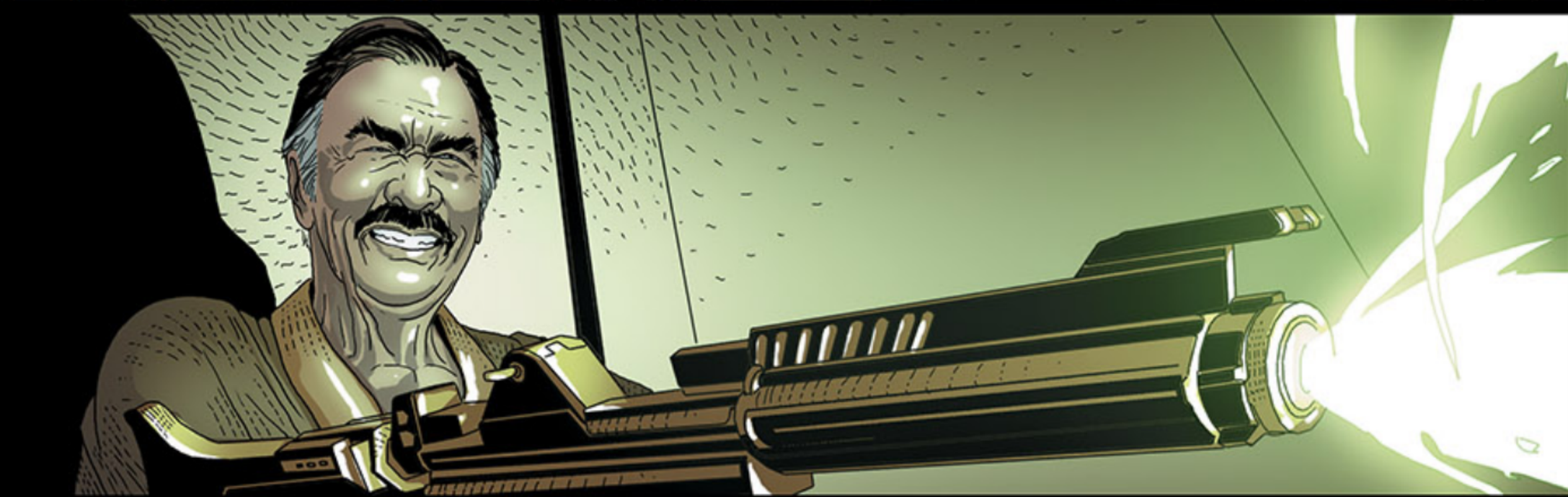
"...YOU DO NOT WANT TO DISCOVER WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO DISAPPOINT ME."

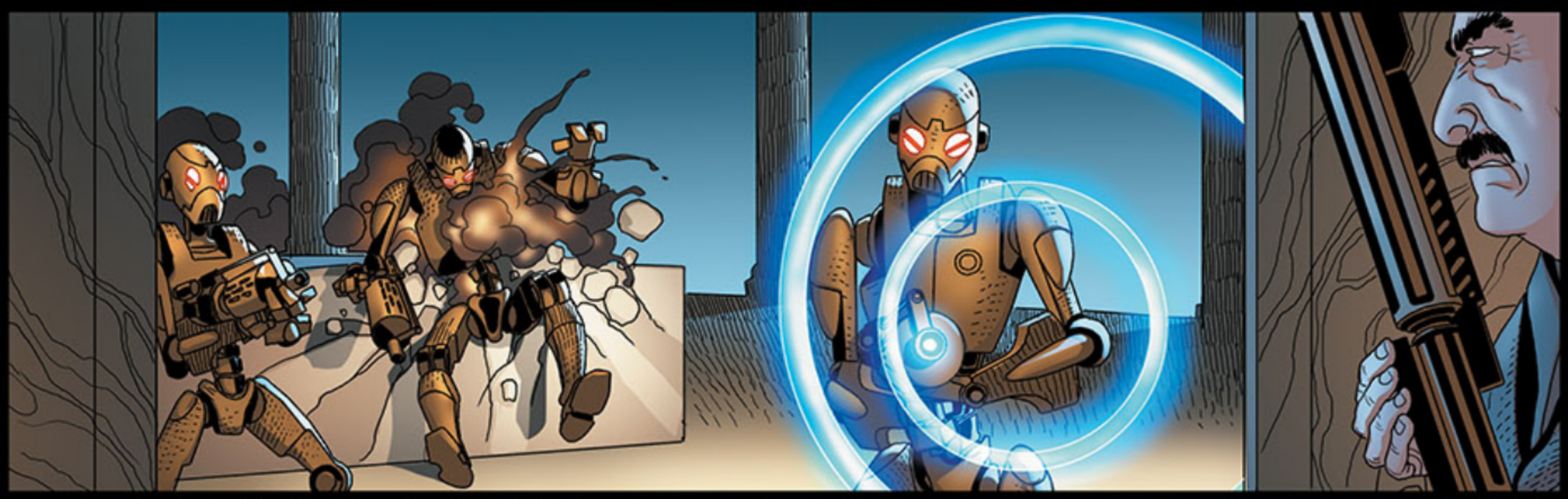
Naboo.

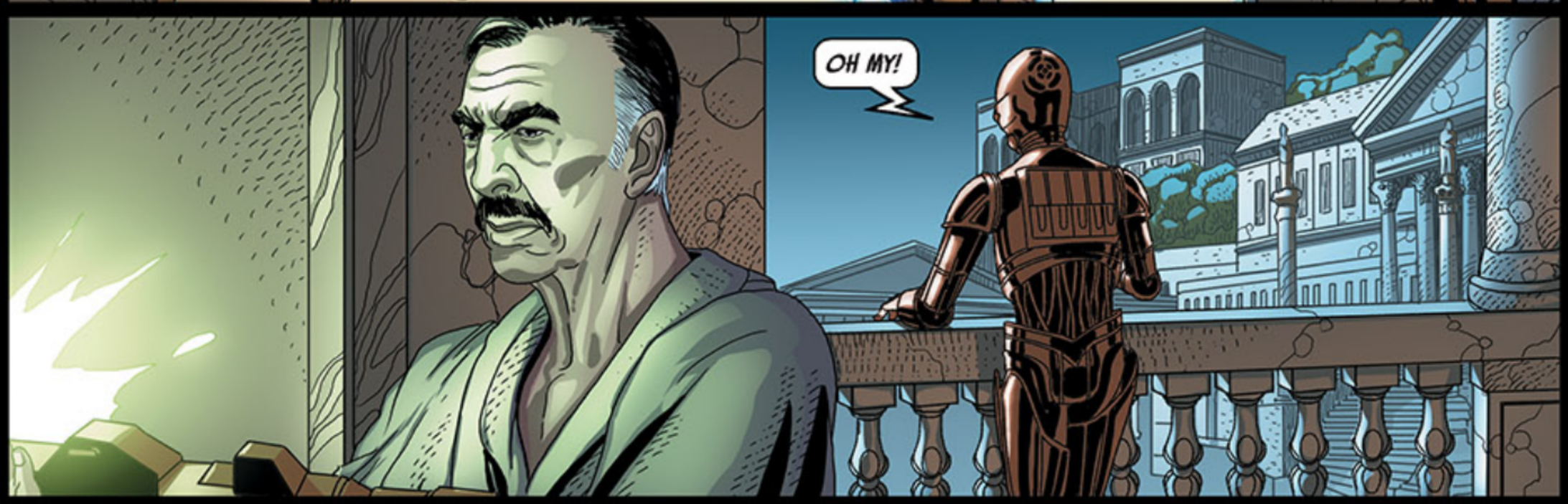
DEFENSES DOWN. DESTROY THE DROIDS. SHOOT UP THE PLACE. STUN ONLY WHEN YOU'RE IN RANGE OF THE TARGET.
WE NEED HIM ALIVE.
BLEEP!
YES, BEETEE.
ALIVE UNTIL I HAVE A LITTLE CHAT.

OH, MY.

NEVER THOUGHT I'D ACTUALLY USE YOU...



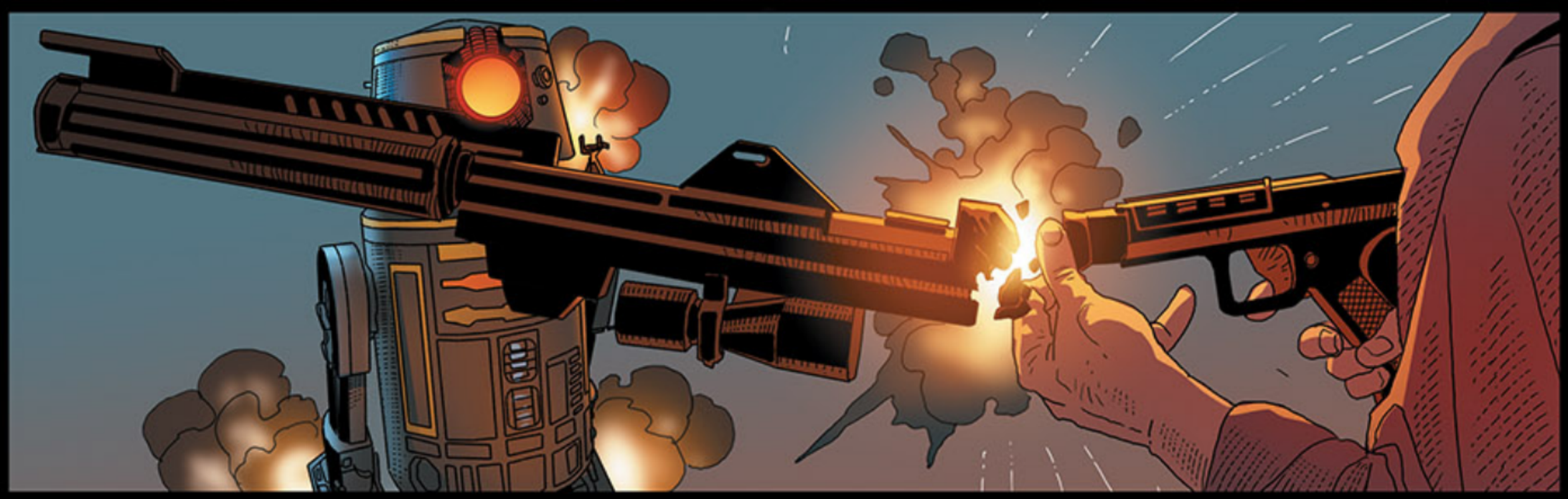



OH MY!

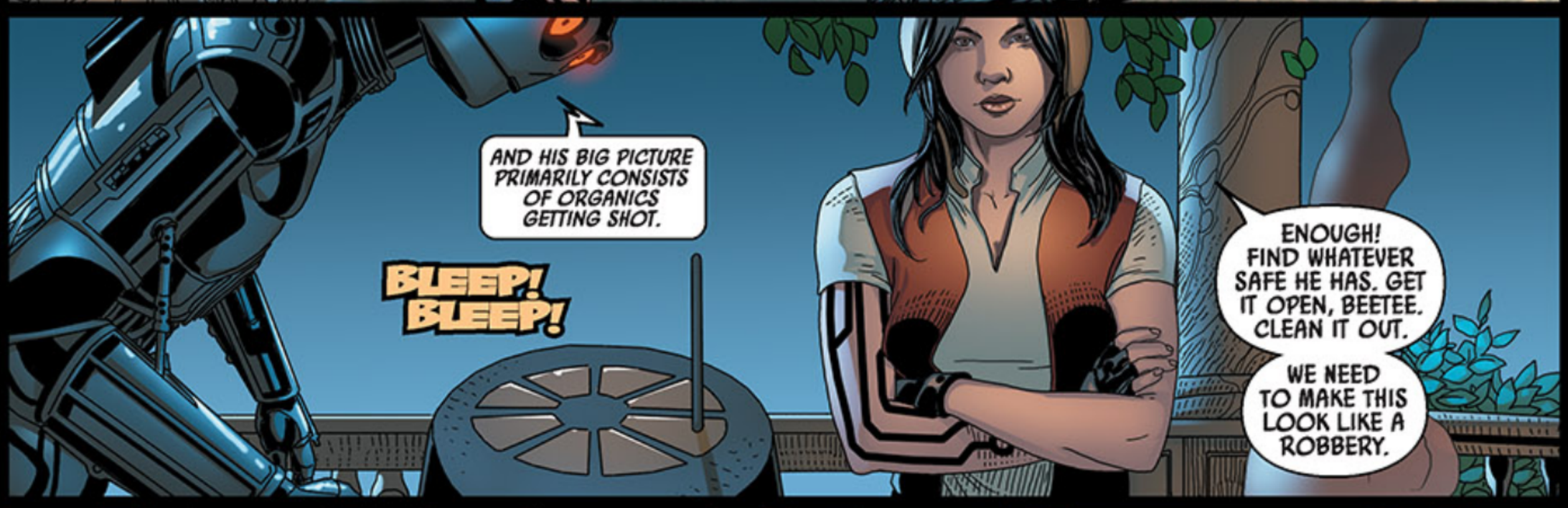
PTTHHT!

BLEEP!

WH--



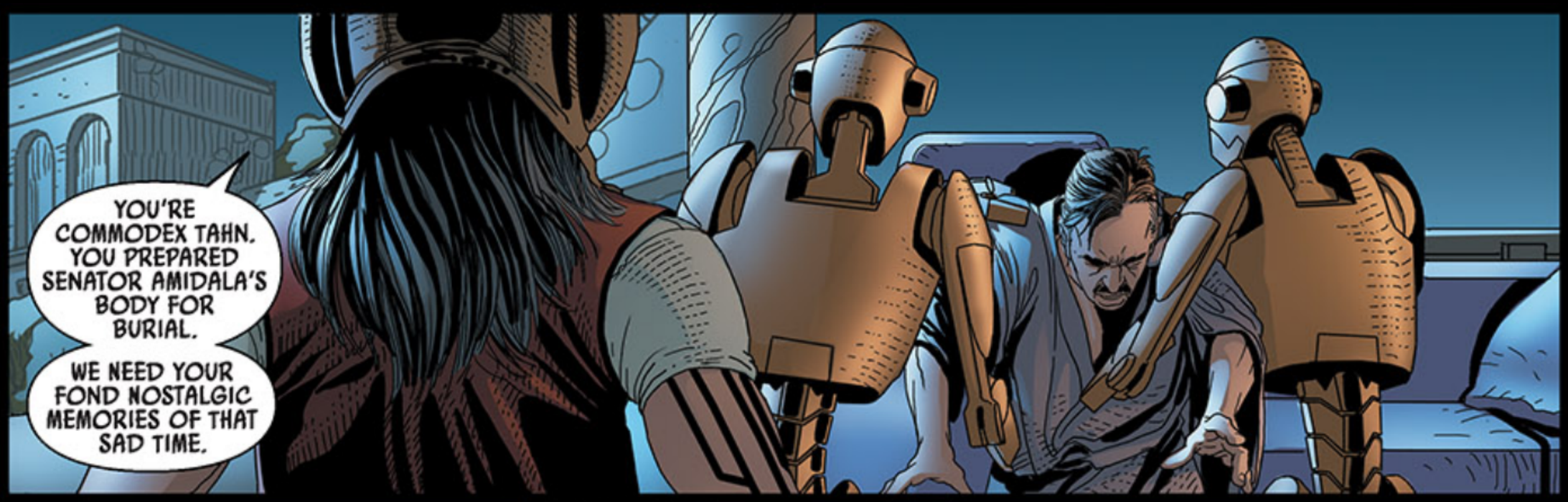
BEETEE. I SAID STUN!
WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT, MISTRESS APHRA, THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR ORDER WAS "ALIVE."
BEETEE IS VERY MUCH A BIG-PICTURE SORT OF THINKER.


AND HIS BIG PICTURE PRIMARILY CONSISTS OF ORGANICS GETTING SHOT.
BLEEP! BLEEP!
ENOUGH! FIND WHATEVER SAFE HE HAS. GET IT OPEN, BEETEE. CLEAN IT OUT.
WE NEED TO MAKE THIS LOOK LIKE A ROBBERY.

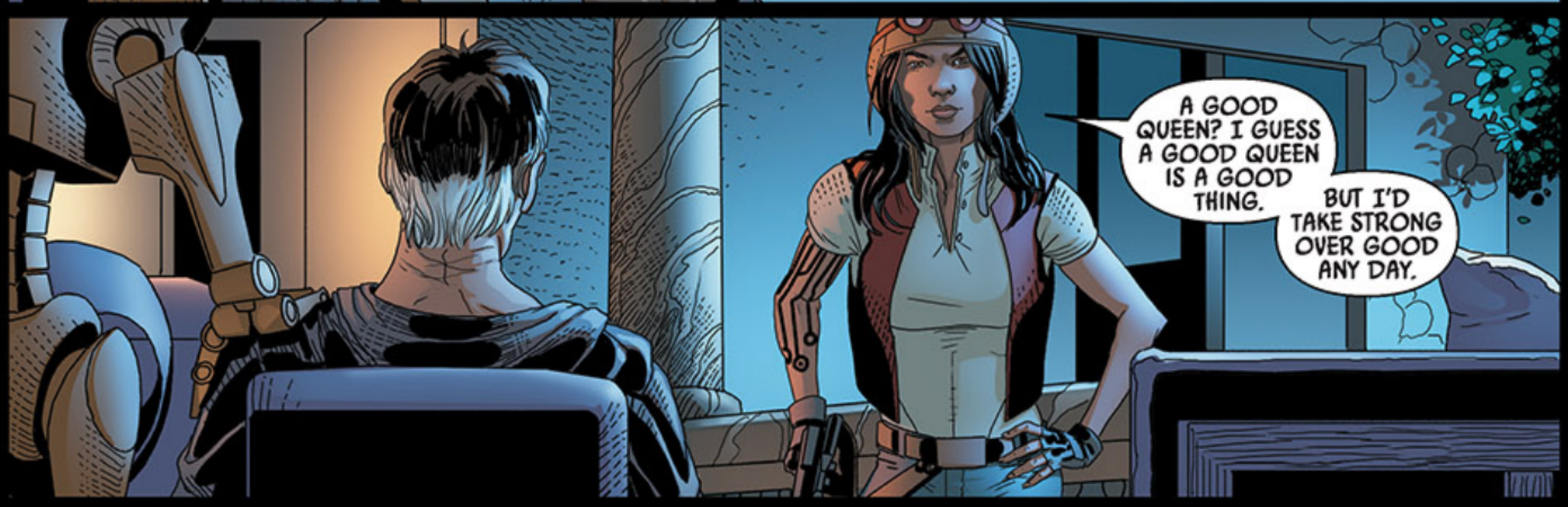
SO YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME NO MATTER WHAT I DO.
YOU'RE NOT GIVING ME MUCH MOTIVATION TO HELP, MISS.

I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE SOMETHING YOU HAVE ANY SAY IN, COMMODEX TAHN.
HELLO!
TRANSCAP: "PRESENTED TO COMMODEX TAHN FOR SERVICES TO NABOO BY PADMÉ AMIDALA."

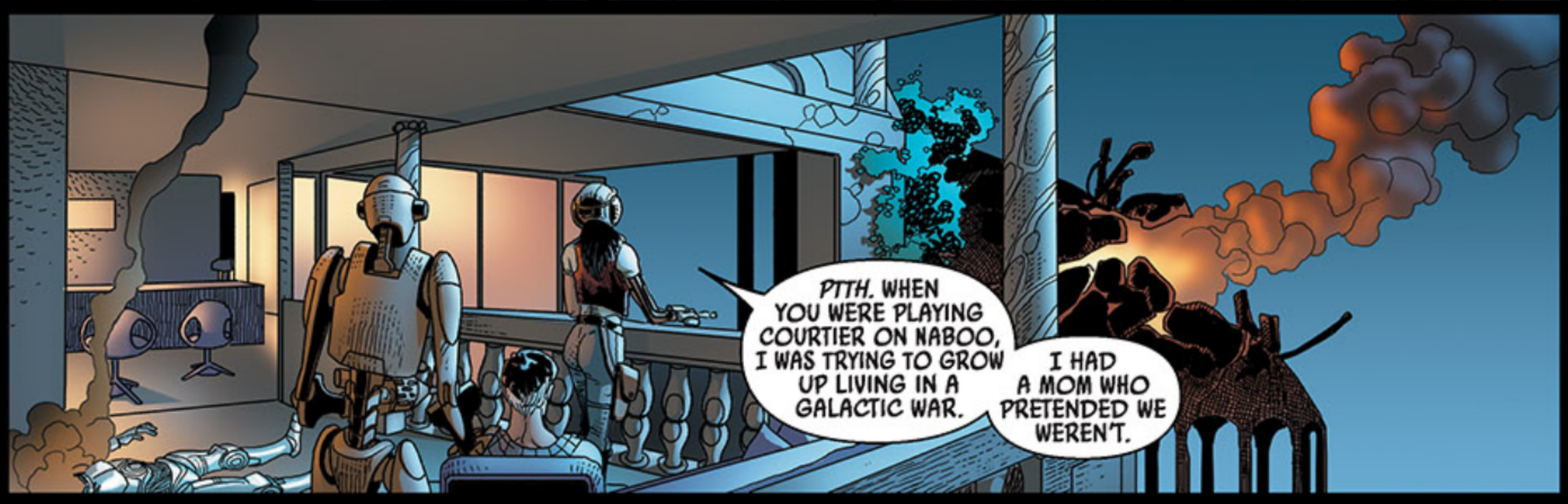
COMMODEX WHO?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIE, YOU NEED TO TRY HARDER THAN THAT.


YOU'RE COMMODEX TAHN. YOU PREPARED SENATOR AMIDALA'S BODY FOR BURIAL.
WE NEED YOUR FOND NOSTALGIC MEMORIES OF THAT SAD TIME.

IF YOU KNEW HER, YOU WOULDN'T SPEAK SO. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU WANT, BUT I WON'T EVER BETRAY HER.
SHE WAS A GREAT QUEEN. A *GOOD* QUEEN.


A GOOD QUEEN? I GUESS A GOOD QUEEN IS A GOOD THING.
BUT I'D TAKE STRONG OVER GOOD ANY DAY.

"THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS."
EASY TO SAY WHEN YOU'RE NOT THE MEANS.


PTTH. WHEN YOU WERE PLAYING COURTIER ON NABOO, I WAS TRYING TO GROW UP LIVING IN A GALACTIC WAR.
I HAD A MOM WHO PRETENDED WE WEREN'T.

HOMESTEAD, ON THE FRONTIER, A BRAVE SPIRITUAL LIFE ON A NEW WORLD AFTER A SPLIT FROM DAD.
THE THING WITH WARS--IF THE WAR DOESN'T GET YOU, ALL THE SCUM OPPORTUNISTS PROFITING FROM THE CHAOS WILL.

RAIDERS CAME IN.
MOM TOLD ME TO RUN. I DID.

BUT I CAME BACK WITH THIS AWESOME CANNON I FOUND IN A CAVE I WAS EXPLORING AND BLEW THEM ALL TO PIECES.
I SAVED EVERYONE.

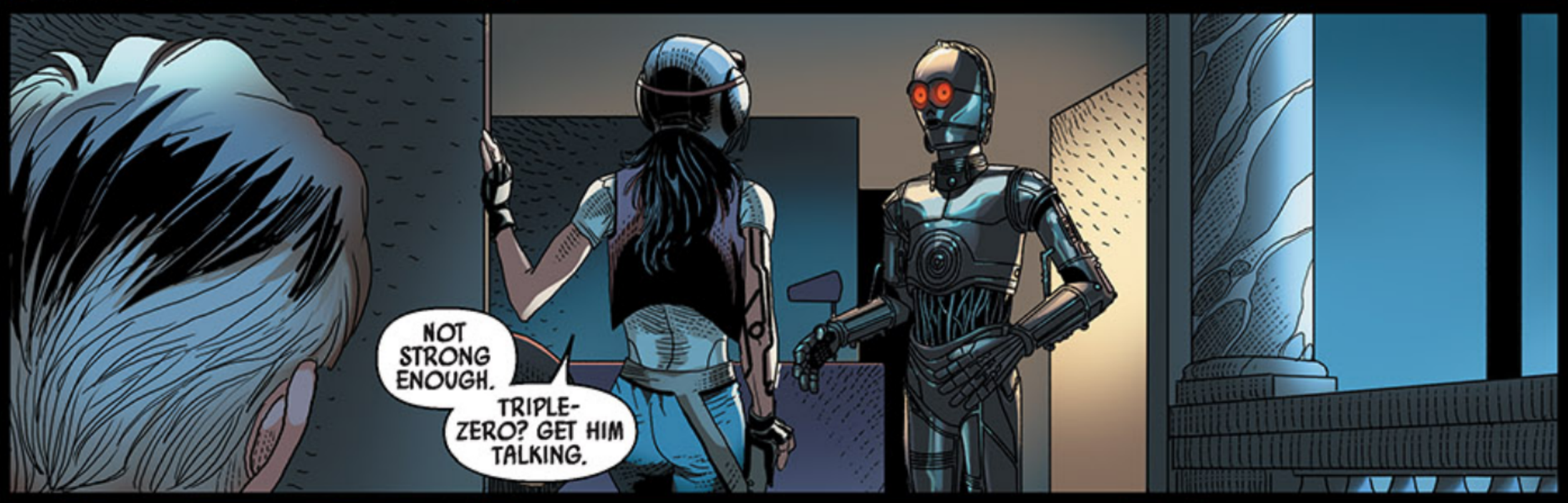
AND DAD CAME BACK, WE ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER, AND NOW I SPEND MY TIME WANDERING THE GALAXY RECOVERING AWESOME CANNONS.
MY MOM *DEFINITELY* DIDN'T DIE IN A DITCH ON A DEAD-END FOREST WORLD WE ONLY WENT TO BECAUSE SHE WAS SO IDEALISTIC.

I'M SORRY.

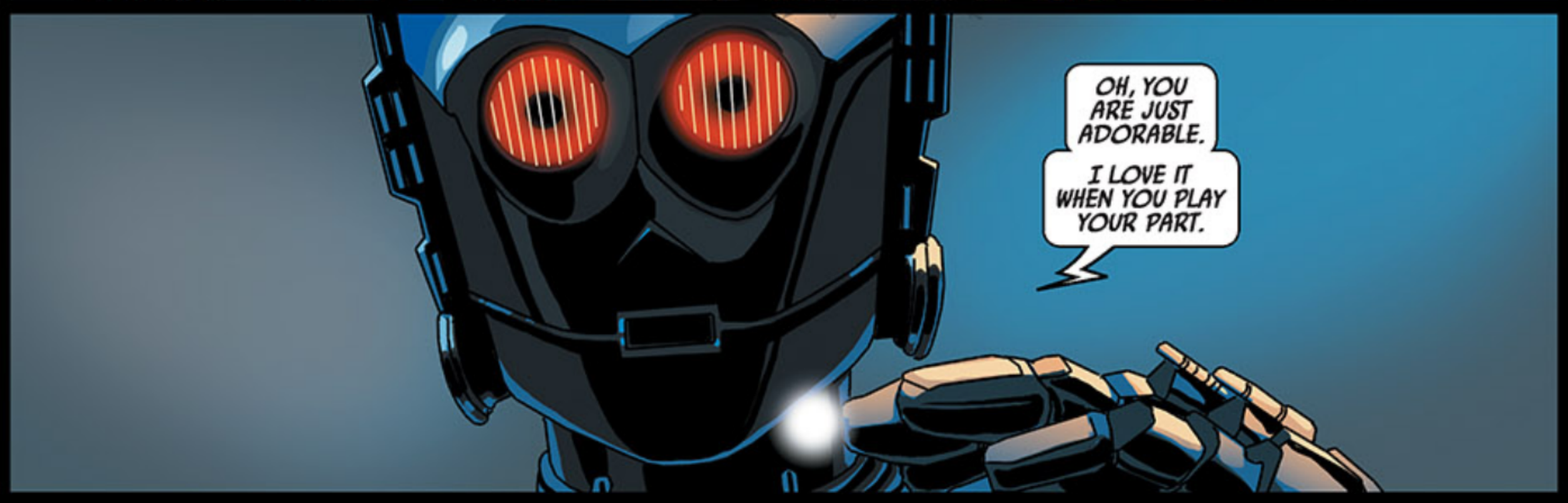
WEREN'T YOU LISTENING? THERE WAS A WAR GOING ON. EVERYONE HAS A SOB STORY.
BOO-HOO FOR EVERYONE.

POINT BEING-- IF YOU'RE NOT A STRONG QUEEN, GOOD DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.
AND STRONG AND ORDER BEATS GOOD BUT WEAK ON EVERY PLANET IN THE GALAXY, FROM NOW UNTIL THE END OF TIME.

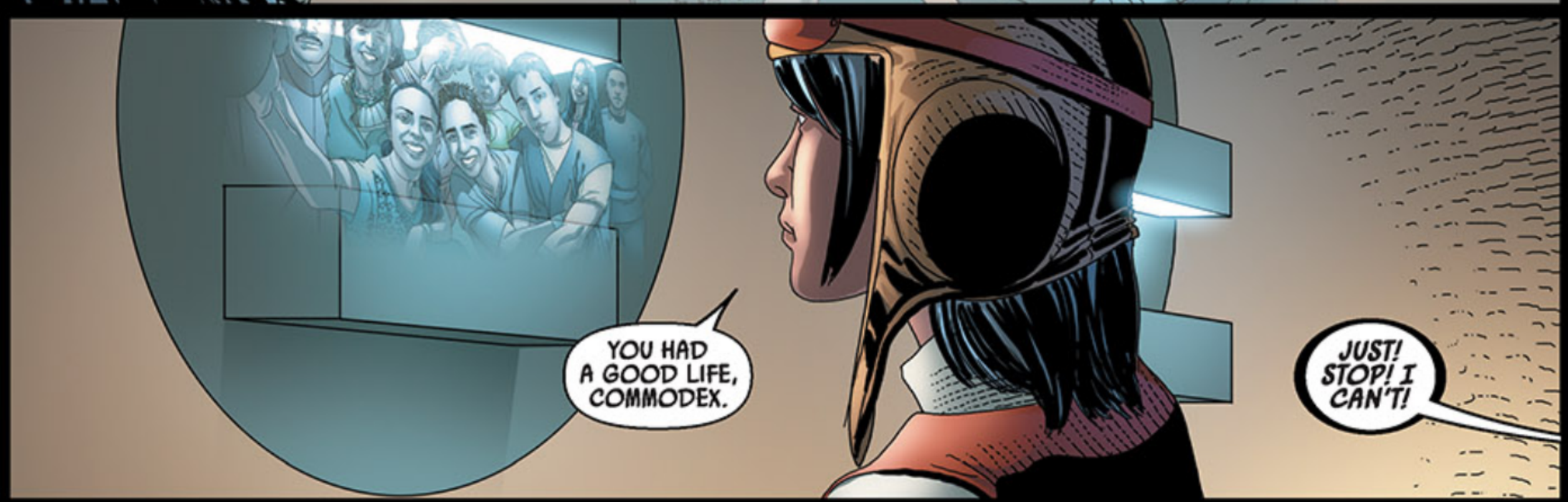
AMIDALA WAS GOOD AND STRONG.

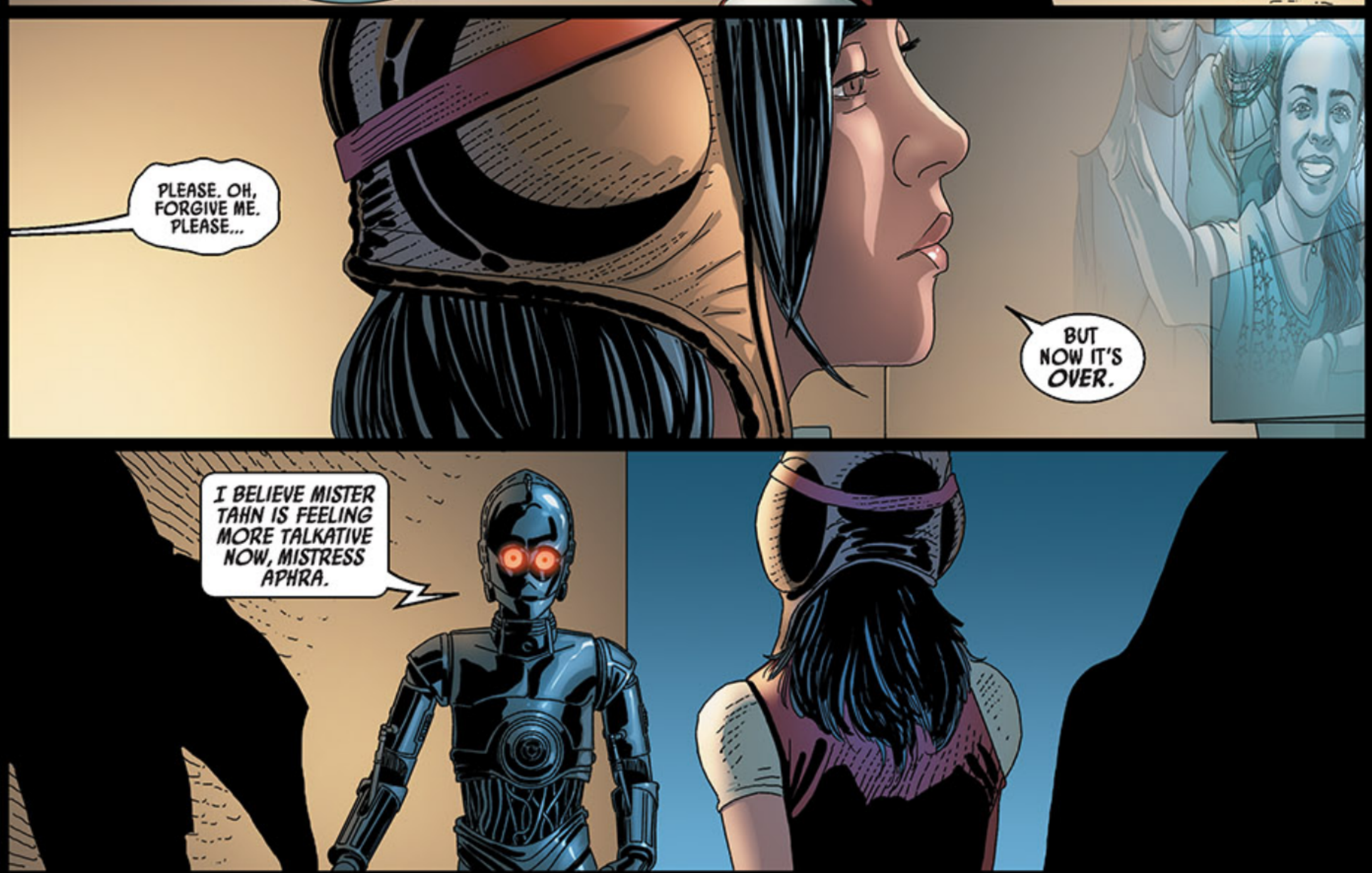

NOT STRONG ENOUGH.
TRIPLE-ZERO? GET HIM TALKING.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET ANYTHING FROM ME.


OH, YOU ARE JUST ADORABLE.
I LOVE IT WHEN YOU PLAY YOUR PART.

NO! NO! NO!


YOU HAD A GOOD LIFE, COMMODEX.
JUST! STOP! I CAN'T!


PLEASE. OH, FORGIVE ME. PLEASE...
BUT NOW IT'S OVER.
I BELIEVE MISTER TAHN IS FEELING MORE TALKATIVE NOW, MISTRESS APHRA.

AMIDALA'S HOLOGRAM WHEN SHE WAS BURIED MADE HER APPEAR LIKE SHE WAS STILL PREGNANT.
BUT YOU, MISTER MORTICIAN, WERE ONE OF THE VERY VERY FEW PEOPLE WHO HAD ANY ACCESS TO THE BODY. YOU KNOW THE TRUTH.

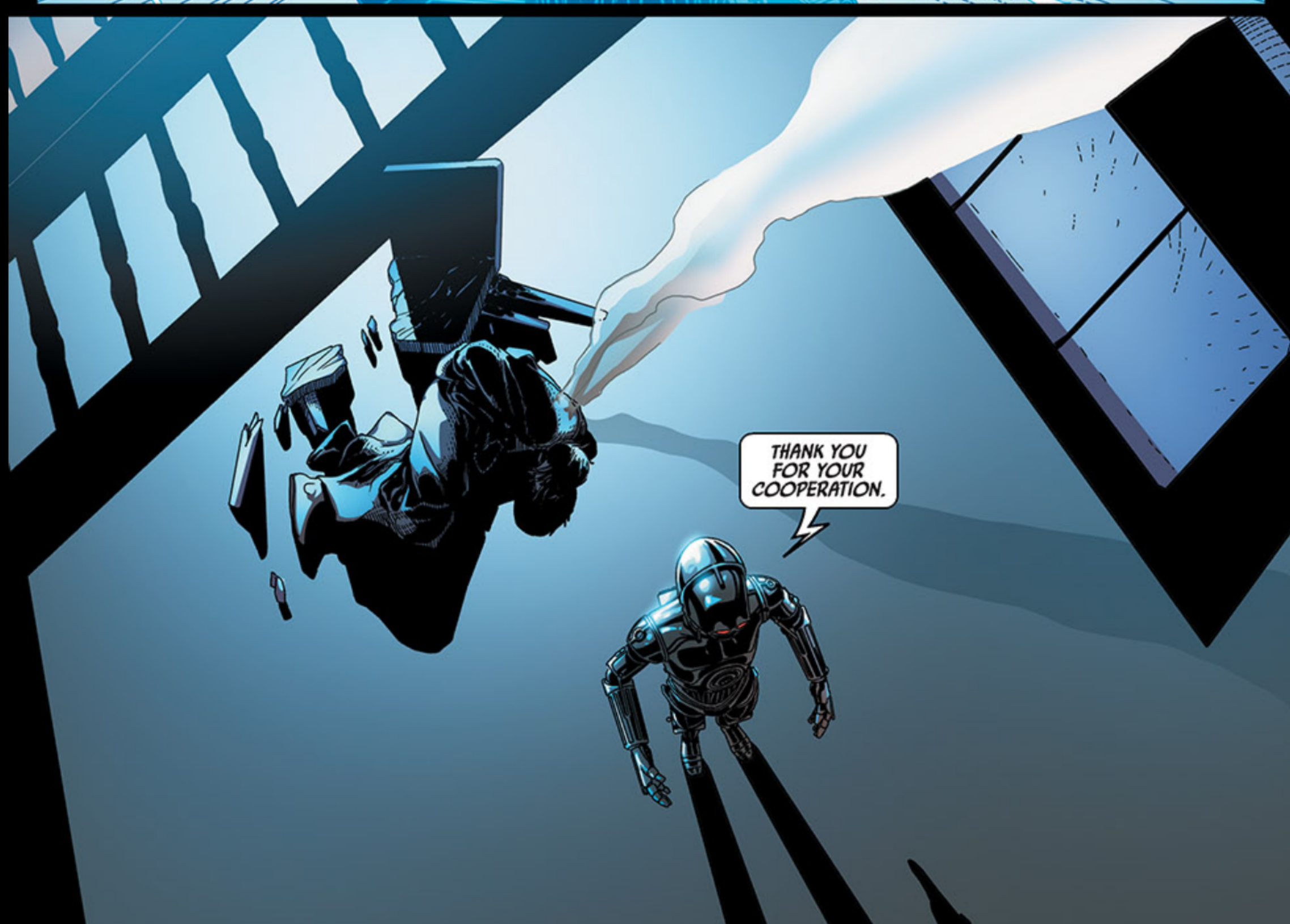
SENATOR AMIDALA HAD GIVEN BIRTH TO A SON.

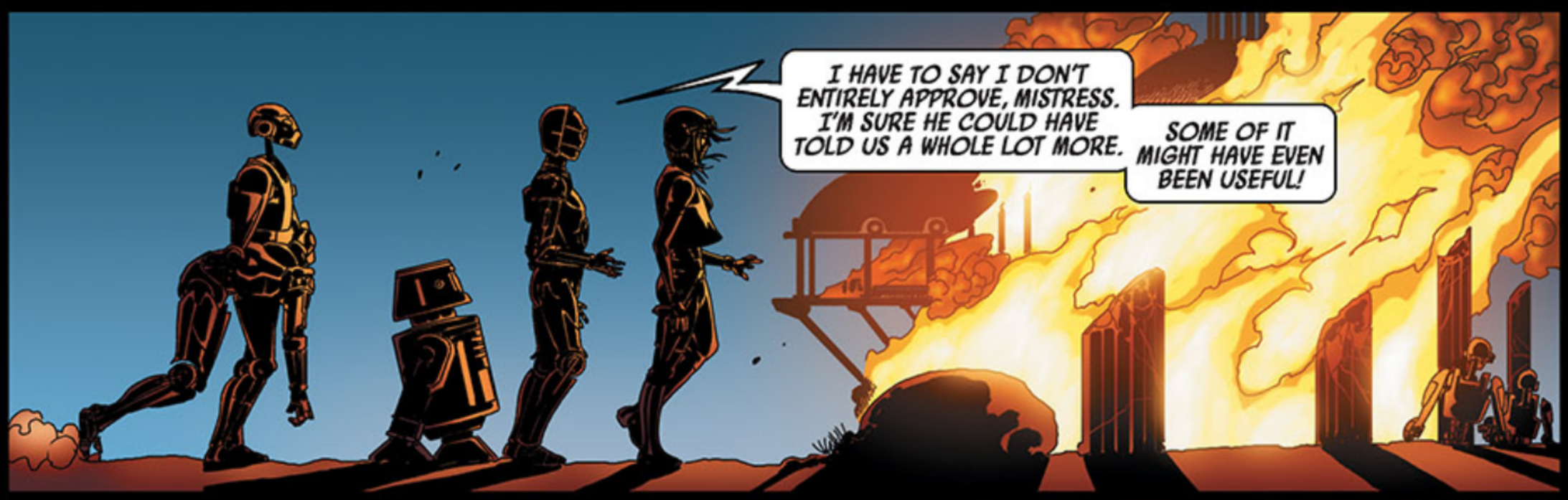
RIGHT? SHE HAD A SON. THE JEDI TOOK THAT BOY AND PUT HIM INTO HIDING.
THIS CAN ALL BE OVER IF YOU JUST CONFIRM WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW...

YES. SHE HAD A *SON*. A HEALTHY BOY. THEY TOOK HIM AWAY.

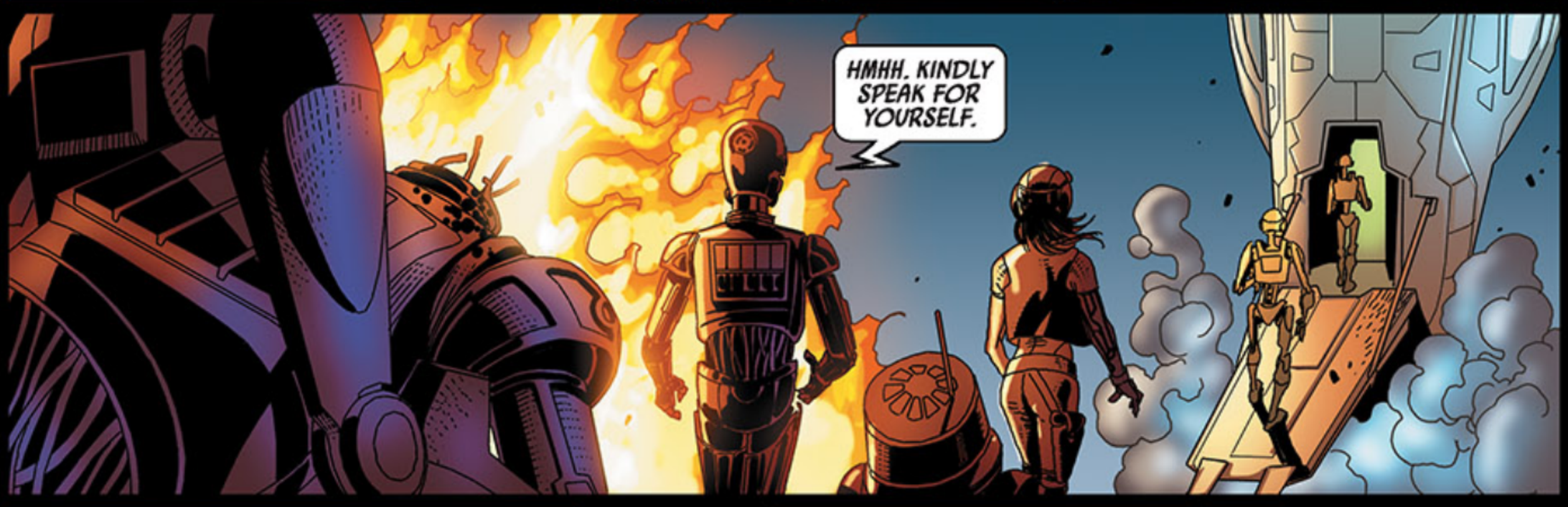
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ELSE.
FORGIVE ME, MY QUEEN.

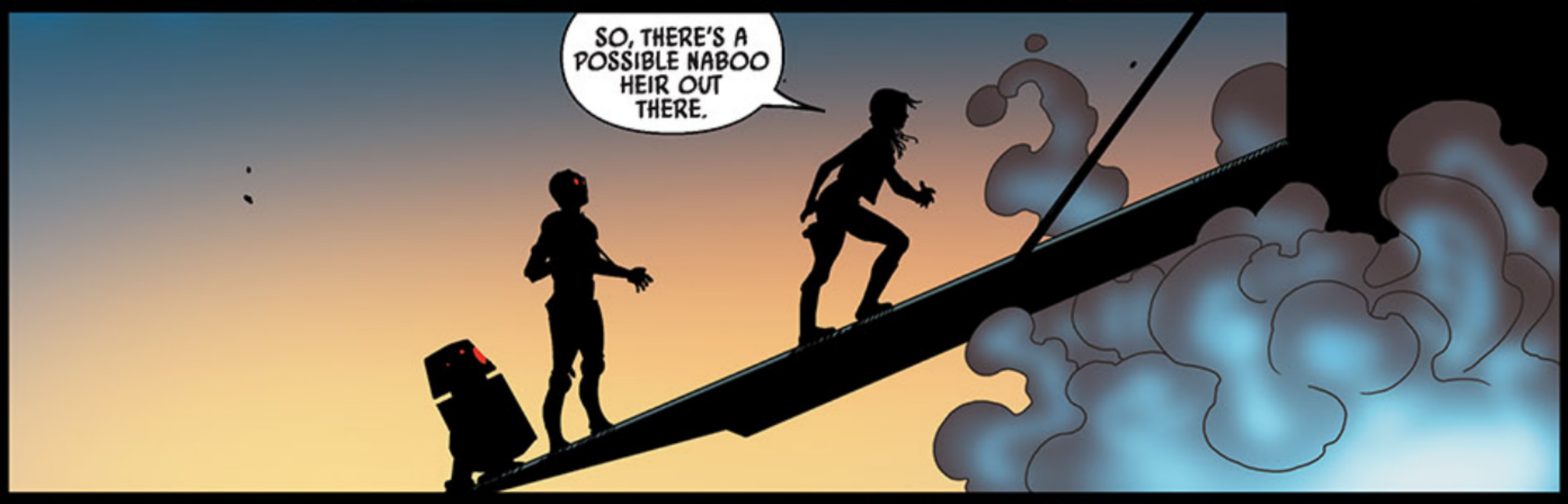
TRIPLE-ZERO? FINISH UP.


THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.


I HAVE TO SAY I DON'T ENTIRELY APPROVE, MISTRESS. I'M SURE HE COULD HAVE TOLD US A WHOLE LOT MORE.
SOME OF IT MIGHT HAVE EVEN BEEN USEFUL!

NO, TRIPLE-ZERO.
WE WERE HERE TO DO THE JOB, NOT BE SADISTS.


HMHH. KINDLY SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.


SO, THERE'S A POSSIBLE NABOO HEIR OUT THERE.

VADER'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW THE FULL STORY.

Anthan Prime.
THAT'S MY REPORT.
IN SHORT: YOUR SOURCES WERE RIGHT.

DID YOU DISCOVER ANYTHING ELSE?

NOTHING RELEVANT, REALLY.
I MEAN, HE REALLY LOVED HER.

SOUNDS LIKE SHE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL.

ER...

...ANYTHING ELSE ON THE TO-DO LIST, LORD VADER?

ANOTHER IMPERIAL AGENT HAS BEEN TASKED TO LOCATE THE BOY WHO DESTROYED THE DEATH STAR.
WE MUST FIND HIM FIRST.
THE ANTE WAS HINTING HE KNOWS A LOT. IF IMPERIAL INTELLIGENCE HAS A LEAD, I'LL BET HE'LL HAVE BETTER.

YOU HAVE THE FUNDS. ARRANGE A MEETING. OFFER WHAT IS REQUIRED.

ON IT. ANY OTHER PROBLEMS ON THE HORIZON?
MY CURRENT ADJUTANT IS... SOMEWHAT EAGER AND ENTHUSIASTIC.

ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT?

I HAVE NO FEARS.

HE SUSPECTS NOTHING.

THE EMPIRE WRITES BACK

DARTH VADER

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think – and we want to hear from you! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com if you want to make it onto a future letters page. Don't forget to mark the letter "OK TO PRINT."

Hi team!

I read *Darth Vader* #6 recently (as well as all of the new *Star Wars* series), and have a burning question. In *Empire Strikes Back*, the Emperor mentions he has no doubt the boy who destroyed the Death Star was the "offspring of Anakin Skywalker." Vader asks, "How is that possible?" In light of Vader's discovery in *Darth Vader #6*, was Vader simply being coy? The *Empire Strikes Back* text crawl does mention Vader was "obsessed" with finding young Skywalker.

Max

That's the reading I was going for. With Vader being explicitly obsessed with Skywalker in advance of the Emperor telling him about his origins suggests that it isn't news for him. Plus Vader's response is a little restrained to the size of the news. You've seen how I wrote Vader discovering this. That Vader didn't trash the whole room implies it's not exactly news for him. I suspect the bigger question is does the Emperor know that Vader knows... - KG

Dear Marvel,

The *Darth Vader* book is my favorite one out there right now. I really enjoy reading it and I love when a new issue is out – but I hate when I'm done reading it because I have to wait for the next one. I've always enjoyed Vader as a character and as a villain and how great of a job you all do with each and every issue. I can't wait to read the next one.

Thanks,
Brendan Tedford

I approve of this opinion. When I become Emperor of the universe, you can live. - KG

Dear Marvel,

Great job so far rebooting the *Star Wars* line! I'm particularly pleased to see your *Darth Vader* series has resurrected Cassio Tagge as Vader's Imperial counterpart. It's always nice to see classic characters given a new life. Tagge always was one of the more interesting Imperials to me who, along with Firmus Piett, had much more of a developed character than the usual Imperial bad guy.

Of course Imperials have a relatively short life when dealing with a certain Dark Lord, so please keep him around for a while! It would be interesting to see Tagge's more tactical and reserved leadership steer the Empire in the wake of the Death Star's destruction, so now that you've brought him back to life, please develop him into the interesting character he can be!

While I'm at it, here's also a request to see perhaps a young Firmus Piett ascend the Imperial ranks as well!

Cheers,
Mike

Glad you approve, Mike. When we were initially talking over the direction we wanted to take the story, Tagge was suggested as a possibility of someone with an implied different opinion of tactical and strategic doctrine. Suffice to say, we'll have more of that in the near future. We're planning the arc that follows VADER DOWN, which definitely explores those areas. - KG

Dear Marvel,

First, you guys have been awesome. Congrats to the entire *Darth Vader* comic team. Every full-page spread has been more amazing than the last one and that is hard to top issue after issue.

Second, a nagging question: if the Triple-Zero matrix had been locked up for 'centuries' as we learn in issue 3, and to restart BeeTee Aphra had to load it into the droid Triple-Zero, then how can Triple-Zero say he is also a product of the Tarkin's initiative? Only way I can square that is the chassis is from the Tarkin era, but the software is old. But why would Tarkin era scientists be using centuries old coding?

Jared D. Cantor

I'm sure we'll get to BeeTee and Triple-Zero's origins in more detail down the line, but in terms of a working theory, you've basically got the basics. In terms of why? Well, Triple-Zero is unusual. He's a really interesting artifact of an earlier era that the Tarkin Initiative thought about removing from quarantine and re-examining, before thinking better of it and locking it away again. - KG

Dear Kieron,

In the theatre we know the importance of blocking or staging a scene. Being able to make a drawing of Darth Vader as frightening as he can be in the movies is difficult.

Please congratulate the artists on Issue 8. When Vader met Inspector Thanoth and you chose to have him greet him sideways, not even turning his head to look at him and simply say "As the Emperor wishes," the result was chilling. Not even LOOKING at him.

Brilliant staging.

Keep up the excellent work!
Buck Connelly

Thanks, Buck. Salva is doing astounding work on *Darth Vader*, in terms of getting the cinematic feel we're looking for. A big part of our thinking – both here and over on *Star Wars* – is that to do everything we can to make it feel like *Star Wars*. Not *Star Wars* Comic Adaptations...actual *Star Wars*. In terms of staging characters, that's very much in how we try to treat Vader. He's got to have that big presence. Walking that line between making him a functional lead and not reducing his sheer intimidation factor is a big chunk of what I spend my time worrying about in the book. - KG

NEXT: